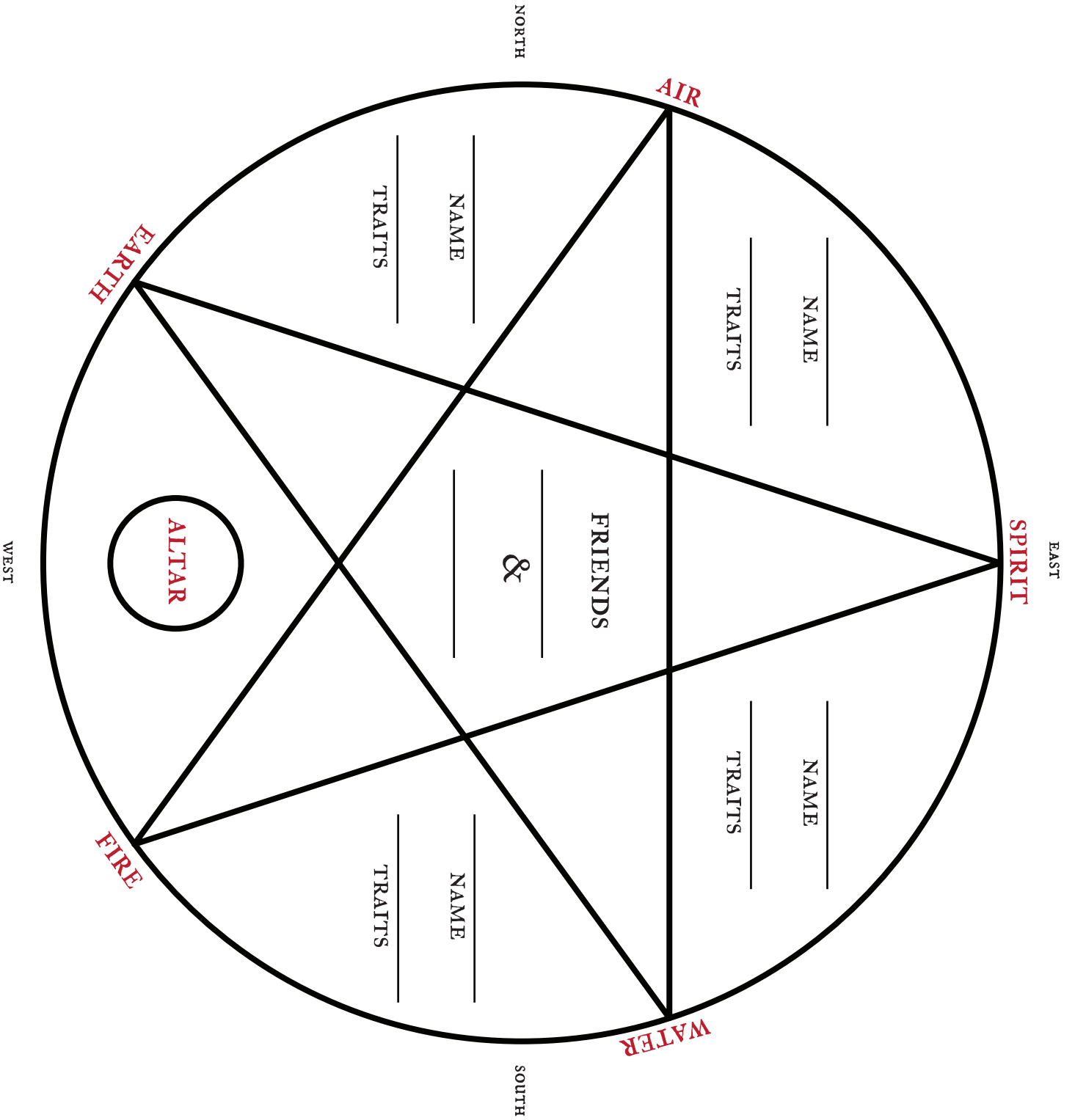


DEAD ❁ FRIEND

a game of necromancy



by Lucian Kahn

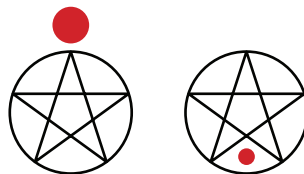


DEAD FRIEND

SPELLBOOK



IN GIRUM IMUS NOCTE ET CONSUMIMUR IGNI





Preparing for the Ritual

- A. Together, briefly describe the setting of this story.
Example settings: modern Brooklyn, revolutionary France, a shtetl, Jupiter 2075, an ancient forest, an elementary school playground, a desert cult, an artists' retreat, a Cold War submarine, a nunnery.
- B. Each choose a name for your character and write it in the center of the pentagram.
Example names: Sophia, Ramon, Ash, Hiro, Luna, Dorian, Pilar, Ji-a, Arjun, Kat, Babs, Mikey, Quinn, Zahara, Eleanor, Thomas, Sterling, Ari, Zoë, Percy, Oskar, Bjorn, River, Betsy, Anastasia, Jane, Winter, Abraxas, Fluffy.
- C. Choose one of the central conflicts below to guide the plot of your story. Each write your character's motivation from the central conflict in the designated spaces to the left and right of the pentagram. *The Magician and The Tower are recommended for beginners. The conflicts are named after Tarot cards; you may wish to draw one at random.*

The Magician

THE LIVING

You wish to bring your dead friend back to life.

THE DEAD

You wish to kill your friend.

The Tower

THE LIVING

You wish to say a final goodbye to your dead friend.

THE DEAD

You wish to return from the dead and wreak havoc.

The Devil

THE LIVING

You wish to gain otherworldly power from your dead friend.

THE DEAD

You wish to own your friend's soul.

Justice

THE LIVING

You wish to force your dead friend to take revenge on someone for you.

THE DEAD

You wish to remain at peace.

- D. Decide who will play THE LIVING and who will play THE DEAD.
Optional: each player strikes a match. As soon as the matches are aflame, the ritual begins. Whoever's match goes out first will play THE DEAD.

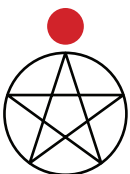
Part One

Earth and Water



Setting the Scene

- A. **THE LIVING:** Place the Magic Circle in the center of the table. Sprinkle a large circle of salt around the paper for protection (or mime this). Place one pen near yourself and the other near **THE DEAD**. Place the **CIRCLE COIN** (the large coin) heads-up slightly outside the circle, so that it touches the word “East”. Place the **STAR COIN** (the small coin) heads-up on the altar.
- B. **THE LIVING:** You are preparing to perform a dangerous ritual of necromancy. Describe the scene of your preparations. Is it day or night? Are you outside or inside? What can you see, hear, or smell?
- C. **THE DEAD:** You died recently and are new to the realm of the dead. Briefly describe that realm. What can you see, hear, or smell? How is it similar to or different from the world you left behind?
- D. **THE LIVING:** Place your right index finger on the **STAR COIN**. At some time before dying, your friend gave you an important object, represented by this coin. Describe the object.
- E. **EVERYONE:** The coins are ritual objects. Over the course of the ritual, the **CIRCLE COIN** travels around the circle, visiting each of the four cardinal directions. At the same time, the **STAR COIN** travels to each of the five points of the pentagram. Together, the two coins mark both the passage of time and the characters’ journey through the elements.



For the rest of the game, whenever the **CIRCLE COIN** moves around the circle, both players hum softly.



For the rest of the game, whenever the **STAR COIN** moves to a different location, **THE DEAD** says, “A word from beyond!”, followed by a single word.

*Examples: “A word from beyond! Moonrise.”
“A word from beyond! Betrayal.”*

RITUAL OF WATER

Like a eulogy, THE LIVING and THE DEAD remember the details of their friendship.



- A. **THE LIVING:** Invoke Water with the following three motions. First, to form an Invoking Pentagram of Water, place your index finger on the Air point of the pentagram, then moving toward Water, trace the entire pentagram with your finger. Second, move the STAR COIN to the Water point of the pentagram. Third, slide the CIRCLE COIN around the circle counterclockwise to the West, the cardinal direction of Water.
- B. **THE LIVING:** Shuffle the hearts/cups suit of cards.
- C. **EVERYONE:** Each draw one card, look at it, and describe a past scene from your friendship that corresponds to the prompts in the **Water Legend**. Although this scene is primarily about you and your friend, it must also include at least one community member from the paper. Feel free to embellish the story with descriptive details.
- D. **EVERYONE:** Repeat part C, but include one community member who has not yet been part of a Water memory. *If all four community members have been part of a Water memory, move on to part E.*
- E. **EVERYONE:** Repeat part C, but build on the existing story using the card's prompt however you wish.
- F. **EVERYONE:** Repeat part C, but place the card face-up near the circle of salt. This scene must foreshadow your motivation in the central conflict.
- G. **THE DEAD:** These memories provoke a jolt of emotion so strong that you momentarily forget you are dead. Describe the emotion.
- H. **THE LIVING:** As you complete the Ritual of Water, the weather begins to change. Describe what you see, hear, and smell.

WATER LEGEND

- 2 you argued with your friend
- 3 your friend brought you to a party
- 4 you reassured your friend about an insecurity
- 5 your friend chose someone else over you
- 6 your friend helped you with a problem
- 7 you lied to your friend
- 8 your friend embarrassed you
- 9 your friend defended you against someone
- 10 you celebrated a holiday with your friend
- Page/Knave/Joker*
you learned something new about your friend
- Jack/Knight*
you were jealous of your friend
- Queen*
your friend gave you romantic advice
- King*
your friend manipulated you into doing something
- Ace*
your earliest memory of your friend

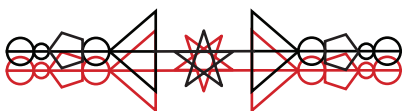
Part Two

Fire and Air



The Magical Link

- A. **THE LIVING:** Place your right index finger on the STAR COIN.
Why is this object so important to you?
- B. **THE DEAD:** Turn over the STAR COIN, tails up.
There is a secret about this object that your friend does not know.
What is the secret?



*The third style of unsuccessful summoning
(as described in Potentia vol. II)*

SUMMONING THE DEAD



- A. **THE LIVING:** You are about to conjure your dead friend into the circle of salt. Set the scene for this act of magic by answering the following questions. How much time has passed since your friend died? What is happening in your life now? What led up to performing this ritual? How did you acquire the power to summon the dead?
- B. **THE LIVING:** Turn the **STAR COIN** back over, heads up, on the fire point of the pentagram. Place your right index finger on the **STAR COIN** and repeat this magical formula three times:

Beloved **NAME OF DECEASED**, thou who perished by **MEANS OF DEATH**, through this **NAME OF OBJECT** I conjure thee.

Beloved **NAME OF DECEASED**, thou who perished by **MEANS OF DEATH**, through this **NAME OF OBJECT** I conjure thee.

Beloved **NAME OF DECEASED**, thou who perished by **MEANS OF DEATH**, through this **NAME OF OBJECT** I conjure thee.

- C. **THE DEAD:** Describe what you look and sound like when you appear in the Magic Circle.
- D. **THE LIVING:** Tell your friend why you have conjured them.
Remember to express your motive from the central conflict.
- E. **THE DEAD:** Tell your friend why you believe they must fail.
Remember to express your motive from the central conflict.

RITUAL OF AIR

THE LIVING *and* THE DEAD *draw weapons for the final battle.*

- A. **THE LIVING:** Invoke Air with the following three motions. First, to form an Invoking Pentagram of Air, place your index finger on the Water point of the pentagram, then moving toward Air, trace the entire pentagram with your finger. Second, move the STAR COIN to the Air point of the pentagram. Third, slide the CIRCLE COIN around the circle counterclockwise to the East, the cardinal direction of Air.



- B. Shuffle the swords/spades suit of cards. If you are using mundane cards, include one joker. Everyone: Randomly draw four cards each, but you will only use three of them. These correspond to the weapons in the **Air Legend** that are available to use in battle. Each weapon card has a literal meaning and an abstract meaning; you may choose which you prefer to use when you play the card.

AIR LEGEND

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2 a blindfold or darkness | 9 a candle or nightmares |
| 3 a vial of blood or loyalty | 10 community allies or solidarity |
| 4 a rune-covered box or prayer | <i>Page/Knave/Joker</i> a shield or what your friend does not know |
| 5 hand-to-hand combat or intimidation | <i>Jack/Knight</i> an animal or passion |
| 6 a map of the dead realm or travel | <i>Queen</i> control of the weather or logical persuasion |
| 7 a key or trickery | <i>King</i> an important document or instilling doubts |
| 8 magic words and hexes or imprisonment | <i>Ace</i> an enchanted sword or a higher authority |

- C. **THE LIVING:** Flip the STAR COIN in the center of the pentagram so that it lands on the table. If it lands heads-up, **THE LIVING** will go first in the final battle. If it lands tails-up, **THE DEAD** will go first. Place the STAR COIN in the center of the pentagram so that it touches both names.
- D. Starting with the winner of the coin-flip, place a card face-up inside the Magic Circle and describe how you use that weapon against your friend. Your friend responds to this attack with another face-up card and description of battle. Continue countering each other's attacks until you have each used three weapons.

- E. **THE LIVING:** Move the STAR COIN to the Spirit point of the pentagram.



- F. **EVERYONE:** As players, come to a consensus about who won the battle and how.

- G. **THE VICTOR:** Describe the moment of your victory. How does the central conflict resolve?

- H. **THE DEFEATED:** Conclude the story with an epilogue: what happens to the two friends next in life or the afterlife?

Lucian Kahn is a roleplaying game designer best known for *Visigoths vs Mall Goths*. *Dead Friend: A Game of Necromancy* was nominated Most Innovative for the IGDN Indie Groundbreaker Awards in 2019. Lucian is also co-editor of *Honey & Hot Wax: An Anthology of Erotic Art Games* (Pelgrane Press). His game *Grandma's Drinking Song* appears in *Doikayt: A Jewish TTRPG Anthology*. He is trans, Jewish, and a gay-coded villain.

Follow Lucian on twitter: @oh_theogony.

MOST INNOVATIVE nominee
IGDN Indie Groundbreaker Awards, 2019



Dead Friend is a roleplaying game for two players, who play a necromancer and a ghost. You will each play the role of a friend, one living and one dead. You will ask and answer questions to develop the characters, their community, their history together, and the motivations leading up to their final conflict. The script follows the dramatic structure of a necromancy ritual, and you will use the spellbook of instructions throughout the entire game like a witch reading spells from an ancient grimoire. The mood may be spooky or intimate, heartwrenching or hilarious – it is up to you as storytellers.

Dead Friend requires 1 tarot deck or 1 deck of mundane playing cards.

“It is a game packed with mystery and ambiance and drama, and I love it!”

- Party of One Podcast -

“I can’t think of the last time I was so immediately impressed by a gaming experience.”

- The Gauntlet Podcast -

“Just buy it already for the sake of seeing something cool, good, and new!”

- Gameosity -